
The Alaska Comfort One Program

Information for Health Care Providers

Overview

Some individuals who are terminally ill do not wish to have life saving measures, such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation, performed when they go into respiratory or cardiac arrest.

In October, 1996, Alaska laws and regulations established the “Comfort One Program” to help health care providers identify terminally ill persons who have expressed these wishes. In addition, the program establishes a protocol for health care providers to respect these wishes once the person has been identified as being enrolled in the program.

This brochure is intended to provide health care providers with information on the Comfort One Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) protocol found in Alaska regulations (7 AAC 16.010 - 7 AAC 16.090).

Definition of Health Care Provider

Health care provider means a person who is licensed, certified, or otherwise authorized by the law of this state to administer health care in the ordinary course of business or practice of a profession. For the purposes of this statute, an individual who is certified to administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation appears to fall within the definition of a “health care provider” as defined in AS 18.12.100(7) with respect to activities related to CPR. Consequently even those certified to administer only limited health care must, by statute, respect the Comfort One form, wallet card, or bracelet.

At the time the physician enrolls the patient in the Comfort One program, the patient is given a copy of the enrollment form and a wallet card. Patients and families are encouraged to keep them in a visible or easily accessible location.

The person may choose to purchase a Comfort One bracelet. Bracelets are only available to those enrolled in the Comfort One program and are particularly useful for persons who travel outside the home. Bracelets may be purchased through the patient’s attending physician.

The Comfort One form, wallet card, and optional bracelet serve as proof to the health care provider that the person is enrolled in the program.

There are two steps to identifying the Do Not Resuscitate patient set out in the regulations, including confirming the identity of the patient and determining whether the patient has a valid DNR order.

It is important to ensure that both criteria are met prior to treating the patient as if he or she has a valid DNR order.

Patients with Out of State DNR Orders

A Do Not Resuscitate order issued in another state or a territory or possession of the United States should be considered valid by the caregiver and the patient should be treated in accordance with the Alaska Comfort One Protocols (AS 18.12.090).

Revocation of DNR Orders

A Do Not Resuscitate order may be revoked by:

- ? the qualified DNR patient;
- ? the patient's attending physician;
- ? a third party to whom the patient conveyed an intent to revoke; or
- ? the parent or guardian of the person for whom the order has been written if the person enrolled in the Comfort One program is less than 18 years of age.

The health care provider should carefully document the revocation. In some cases, the patient may simply destroy copies of the Comfort One form and wallet card.

The protocol (regulations) requires that the physician or other health care provider (EMT, Paramedic, etc.) immediately proceed with patient assessment and care, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation, until the patient’s identity is confirmed and the patient is determined to have a valid DNR order.

Establishing the Patient’s DNR Status

The caregiver should establish the patient’s DNR status through at least one of the following means:

- ? a Comfort One form or Comfort One card for the patient;
- ? a Comfort One bracelet worn or carried by the patient;
- ? a DNR identification for the patient that is from another state, a territory, or a possession of the United States;
- ? an attending physician's DNR order, when the order is in writing and a copy has been provided or seen by the physician or other health care provider; or
- ? a verbal order has been issued directly to the physician or health care provider by the attending physician.

Proof of Enrollment

Comfort One Identification Form

The Comfort One Identification form is printed on 8.5 " x 11" carbonless paper with the Comfort One logo (see brochure cover page) printed at the top. The form contains the patient's name, address, date of birth, and gender. To be valid, the form must be signed by both the patient, if the patient is able, and the patient's physician.

Comfort One Wallet Card

The wallet card is detached from a larger form and measures approximately 2.5 inches x 3.5 inches. The Comfort One logo is printed at the top. The front of the wallet card contains the patient's name, date of birth, and gender. A serial number for the card is printed vertically on the front side of the card. The reverse side lists the name of the patient's physician and the physician's contact number.

Comfort One Bracelet

The bracelet has a gold chain, gold border, and a green background. The Comfort One logo is prominently displayed on the bracelet in white and gold lettering.

Confirming the Patient's Identity



Under the Alaska DNR Protocol, the following are acceptable methods of confirming the patient's identity:

- ? the patient communicating the patient's name;
- ? the patient's hospital or other institutional identification arm band;
- ? the patient being personally known to the physician or other health care provider;
- ? the patient's driver's license or credit card; or
- ? another person having identified the patient.

If the patient is unconscious or otherwise unresponsive to questions regarding the patient's identity, the physician or other health care provider may rely solely on the Comfort One bracelet worn by the patient without using further methods to identify the patient.

Do Not Resuscitate Protocols

Once the DNR status and patient's identity have been confirmed, and the patient is pulseless or apneic, the protocols are easy to follow:

- ? **If the patient does not have a valid DNR order**, the standard treatment and transport protocols, including CPR, should be employed.
- ? If the patient **DOES have** a valid DNR order, resuscitation efforts should not be initiated or, if already in progress, terminated immediately.

Palliative Care

Health care personnel should provide comfort care as appropriate for the patient and within the scope of lawful activities for the individual health care provider.

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